Specific Programme to Check Dropouts

*248. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that there has been an increase in the number of dropouts from elementary school during the current year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there is any specific programme planned by Government to reduce the number during the current Plan period; and

(d) if so, the details of the programme and the ratio of Central allocation for this programme, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) to (d) The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a national programme being implemented in partnership with the States, in which, *inter alia,* one of the goals specifies retention of all children upto the elementary level by 2010. The dropout rate has fallen sharply by 11.3 percentage points at primary level since 2001 upto 2004, compared to a decline of only 2.3 percentage points between the years 1990 to 2000. The dropout rate at the elementary level declined from 53.7% in 2000-01 to 50.84% in 2004-05.

A multi-pronged approach has been adopted under the SSA for reducing dropout rates. These include, *inter alia,* strengthening of schools and improving the quality of education through improvement in school infrastructure, recruitment of additional teachers, provision of annual school grants, regular training of teachers, regular academic support to teachers etc. In addition, interventions under SSA also aim at building community support, flexible schooling for the hardest to reach children, special provisions to promote education of girls, as well as children with special needs. The Mid-day-Meal programme also complements the strategy to reduce dropout rates.

The Central-State funding pattern for the Xlth Plan period is in the ratio of 65:35 for the first two years, 60:40 in the third year, 55:45 in the fourth and 50:50 in the final year of the Plan period for all States/UTs except the North Eastern States where it will be in the ratio of 90:10 with the Central Share being resourced from the 10% earmaked funds for the region in SSA's central budget.

Entry of foreign universities

* 249. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the policy of Government in allowing the entry of foreign universities to offer education in India, after entering an agreement with the concerned Indian University;

(b) the areas of education that are to be offered by such univerisites;

(c) whether there would be a mechanism to oversee the activities of the foreign universities; and

(d) whether Government would permit 'fly by night' operators from abroad to come and set up their shops in the name of offering higher education and is aware of its full implications?